**Research Design Template for an Academic Study**

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|  | **Epistemology** | **Strong positivist** | **Positivist** | **Constructionist** | **Strong constructionist** |
| 1 | **Background** | What is the theoretical problem and what studies have been conducted to date? | What is the theoretical problem and what studies have been conducted to date? | What are the ongoing discussions among researchers and practitioners? | What are the ongoing discussions among researchers and practitioners? |
| 2 | **Rationale** | What is the main gap in existing knowledge? | What are the main variables, and how are they related to one another? | What perspectives have been covered and what are missing? | What are the limitations in the discussions so far?  |
| 3 | **Research aims** | Specify testable hypotheses | List main propositions or questions | Identify the focal issue or question | Explain how the research will add to the existing discussion |
| 4 | **Setting** | Determine the wider population from which you will draw your sample | Determine the research setting and the population from which you will draw your sample | Identify an appropriate research setting and justify your choice  | Describe your research setting and justify that the methods you intend to use are appropriate to the setting  |
| 5 | **Data****(see Chapters 6, 7 and 9)** | Define variables and determine measures | Define dependent and independent variables and determine measures | Explain and justify a range of data collection methods | Identify main sources of data. How will interviews be recorded/transcribed, etc.? |
| 6 | **Sampling****(see Chapters 4 and 9)** | Explain how group selection and comparison will eliminate alternative explanations | Justify sample size and explain how it reflects the wider population | How will the sample enable different perspectives to be included? | Explain sampling strategy. Will it be opportunistic, emergent, comparative, etc.? |
| 7 | **Access****(see Chapter 5)** | How are experimental subjects to be recruited? | How can responses to questionnaires etc. be assured? | What is the strategy for gaining access to individuals, organizations? | How will insights from co-researchers be combined? |
| 8 | **Ethics****(see Chapter 5)** | Is participation voluntary? | Could results be used to harm any participants? | Will the interests of individuals and organizations be protected? | How ‘open’ is the research? Will there be any deception? |
| 9 | **Unit of analysis** | Differentiate between control, experimental groups, etc. | Specify whether individuals, groups, events or organizations. | How will units/cases be compared with each other? | What are the entities that are to be compared with each other? |
| 10 | **Analysis****(see Chapters 8, 10 and 11)** | Statistical procedures for examining differences between groups | Statistical procedures for examining relationships between variables | Arrangements for coding, interpreting and making sense of data. | How will co-researchers be involved in sense-making? |
| 11 | **Process** | Explain stages in the research process | Explain stages in the research process | Explain what can be pre-planned and what can be open-ended | Provide realistic timing including adequate provision for contingencies |
| 12 | **Practicalities****(see Chapter 5)** | How will groups be recruited? Where will experiments take place? | Who will gather data? How will it be recorded/ stored? Who will analyse it? | How will researchers share observations? Who will do transcriptions, etc.? | How will co-researchers be engaged? |
| 13 | **Theory** | How will hypotheses be tested? | In what ways will the results add to existing theories? | Will the research build on existing theory or develop new concepts? | Will the research build on existing theory or develop new concepts? |
| 14 | **Outputs (see Chapter 12)** | Where will the research results be published? | What is the dissemination strategy? | What is the dissemination strategy? | How will insights be shared with colleagues and collaborators? |